

WASHINGTON DC – Today, former educator US Congressman Michael Honda (D-CA) came out in support of the controversial lawsuit filed last week by over 60 students and several education organizations (Robles-Wong v CA) against the State of California and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Rep Honda hailed the plaintiff's primary goal, which is to compel California to study the actual costs of providing education services to "all children with all needs".

"This lawsuit calls for the complete transformation of California's underlying financing structure," said Rep Honda. "I applaud the courage of the students and their families in challenging California's current inequitable education system."

Rep Honda, who championed a similar goal by creating the Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission, now housed within the U.S. Department of Education, continued, "I fought hard for the establishment of the Equity Commission because our education finance structure is outdated, relying on factors such as average daily attendance, average costs for "regular" students and concentrations of low-income, special-education and English-language-learner students. Outdated systems are inexcusable in an economically recessed nation falling behind globally."

The plaintiffs in Robles-Wong v CA claim that California has not documented the costs of delivering the constitutionally-required education program, and consequently, has created a pattern of disparities that fails many of our children, some more than others. Robles-Wong v CA concludes that the state's education finance structure is irrational, unstable, unpredictable, and has made no attempt to align funding policies and mechanisms.

"California, in response to Robles-Wong v CA," said Honda, "needs to conduct an analysis of all physical and personnel costs associated with schooling in order to meet state-prescribed standards. Secondly, it must conduct an analysis of the costs associated with varying learning needs of each student. Thirdly, it must develop a finance structure that is based on the actual costs for both schooling and student needs."

"In sum, the state needs to find some way to evaluate each child and develop a profile that describes the learning needs of each child. That is the only way we can understand student differences and fund classrooms according to the students in those classrooms."